

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-14

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S E C R E T CAIRO 5970

LIMDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID ECRE EG

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ROLE FOR CORPS OF ENGINEERS IN SUEZ CANAL
REHABILITATION

1. MAJOR GENERAL J.W.MORRIS, DIRECTOR, CIVIL WORKS PROGRAM OF THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND THREE-MAN COE TEAM, HAVE BEEN IN EGYPT FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS IN RESPONSE TO AN UNSOLICITED REQUEST FROM SCA CHAIRMAN MASHOUR, AND HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH THE AUTHORITY'S PRESENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PLANS. MORRIS'S MEETINGS AND MY SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM SUGGEST THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POTENTIALLY FRUITFUL FIELDS OF COOPERATION IF THE PROPER ARRANGEMENTS, BOTH FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL, CAN BE MADE.

2. SPECIFICALLY, SINCE THE COPRS OF ENGINEERS HAS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ALL PHASES OF WATERWAYS, PORTS AND HARBORS IN THE US, IT IS EMINENTLY QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE THE SCA WITH ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE THAT IS SORELY NEEDED AND WOULD BE EXTREMELY VALUABLE AS AN INDICATION OF THE USG'S DESIRE TO BE OF HELP. THE PROVISION OF ON-SITE PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE, PREDOMINATELY BY CIVILIANS, WOULD IN MY JUDGMENT BE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE HERE AND WOULD MOST CERTAINLY BE OF USE AT THIS STATE IN THE REHABILITATION OF THE CANAL. THERE IS, OF

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COURSE, THE QUESTION OF CONGRESSIONAL REACTION TO THE

DEPLOYMENT OF A COE MISSION, BUT I WOULD HOPE THIS MIGHT BE MANAGEABLE IF SUCH MISSION WERE (A) ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC SUEZ CANAL PROJECT, (B) SENT ONLY FOR THE DURATION OF THAT PROJECT, AND (C) PRIMARILY CIVILIAN IN COMPOSITION.

3. THE QUESTION OF FINANCING WOULD HAVE BE BE RESOLVED AS THE PRELIMINARY STEP BEFORE ANY OFFER COULD BE MADE. CONCEIVABLY, A PORTION OF THE AID LOAN EARMARKED FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE SUEZ CANAL COULD BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE. GENERAL MORRIS'S HORSEBACK ESTIMATE IS THAT A FIGURE OF \$5 MILLION WOULD FUND THE TEAM FOR ONE YEAR, RELYING ON SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY FOR THE RELATIVELY SMALL GROUP ON SITE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE COE MAY BE ABLE TO EXTEND SOME FORMS OF ASSISTANCE FROM ITS PRESENT RESOURCES, LARGELY THE EXCHANGE OF TECHNICAL PAPERS AND PERSONNEL. GENERAL MORRIS AGREES WITH ME THAT A LOW-PROFILE MISSION OPERATING FOR A SPECIFIC TIME PERIOD COULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO EXPEDITIOUS RESOLUTION OF SOME OF THE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO OPENING THE CANAL, KEEPING IT IN OPERATION, AND IN PROVIDING CONSULTING AND MANAGERIAL HELP IN ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT WITHOUT COMPETING WITH PRIVATE FIRMS FROM THE US OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY. SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR EFFORTS HERE AND DESERVES CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

4. GENERAL MORRIS WILL RETURN TO WASHINGTON ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 11. IF YOU APPROVE OF THE IDEA, I SUGGEST APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS MIGHT WANT TO DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH HIM. I HAD A COE MISSION WITH ME IN SAUDI ARABIA AND IT WAS A MAJOR US ASSET.

5. MORRIS ALSO TELLS ME THAT MASHOUR WANTS TO CALL ON ME TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE COE HELP.
EILTS

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED PER INSTRUCTIONS SS-O. MR. JOHNSON.

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